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## Sermon from the Epistle for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

PHIL. 4, 4—7.

The central idea in this lesson, which also seems to have determined its selection as an Advent lesson, is contained in the words: "The Lord is at hand." The conviction that "the Lord is at hand" is to quicken all those noble virtues which the apostle enumerates in this lesson as essential to a Christian life. We shall, accordingly, have to examine in the first place the nature of that presence of the Lord which the apostle has in mind.

"The Lord is at hand," — words similar to these had been spoken some forty years before this Epistle to the Philippians was written. John the Baptist had begun his ministry by preaching: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. 3, 2. With the same words our Lord soon after began His public ministration. Hence, these words, "The Lord is at hand," at one time denoted the visible presence of Christ during the years of His earthly pilgrimage. This cannot be their meaning in our Epistle lesson, because the epistle was written after the ascension of the Lord. (Advent of the incarnation.)

Prior to His ascension the Lord had instructed His disciples concerning another mode of His presence with them. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," He had said, "there am I in the midst of them," Matt. 18, 2. This presence of the Lord was by a later promise made perpetual; for immediately before His ascension the Lord had said to His disciples: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matt. 28, 20. This second presence of Christ, whenever and wherever His Word is preached and His sacraments are dispensed, the apostle has in mind when he assures the Philippians: "The Lord is at hand." (Advent of grace.)

However, the apostle certainly connects with these words still another thought. Among the themes of the Savior's last discourses to His disciples His return to judgment had occupied a prominent place. His remarks on this subject had culminated in the warning: "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matt. 24, 42. Without satisfying the disciples' curiosity as to the exact date of His return, the Savior had impressed upon them the thought that He would soon return. Accordingly, we find throughout the writings of the apostles expressions of a hopeful expectation of the return of Christ. Peter assures his readers: "The end of all things is at hand," 1 Pet. 4, 7. James comforts his suffering brethren with the remark: "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh," James 5, 8. John opens his Revelation with the significant warning: "The time is at hand," Rev. 1, 3. In view of these facts, it is not likely that we shall misunderstand our apostle when we refer his words, "The Lord is at hand," also to the last coming of Christ. (Advent of glory.)

Now, the presence of Christ in His Gospel and in His sacraments is a privilege which we also enjoy at this time and place; and His return to judgment is that one event of overshadowing importance to which we are all looking, and for which we are preparing. If, therefore, the epistle before us can give us information regarding the state of mind of a believer prior to the Day of Judgment, we shall evidently be greatly benefited; for that exactly meets the exigencies of our case. Permit me, then, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to set before you

#### THE STATE OF MIND OF CHRISTIANS WHO ARE WAITING FOR THE COMING OF THEIR LORD.

It is characterized by,

1. *joy and moderation;*
2. *freedom from care, and peace.*

#### 1.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice!" That is the first call which the apostle issues to believers waiting for the coming of the Lord. This is a striking invitation, when we bear in mind that the coming of the Lord will be His coming to judge the quick and the dead. How the guilty criminal trembles at the approach of the day of his trial! What agonies of despair seize the sentenced murderer, as he counts the hours before his execution, and finds that he has but a couple of hours to live! Joy finds no place in such guilty hearts; the thought of the doom awaiting them chills every emotion of cheer and hope in their bosom. But what is the most trying scene in an earthly court of justice compared to the horrors and the woe of the day of vengeance! If a sentence decreeing the temporal death of a criminal causes the culprit to swoon and

stagger with a weight of grief and shame, how shall the recreant who faces Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell be affected, when he hears that sentence from which there is no appeal! For, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Hebr. 10, 31.

The conclusion is, then, inevitable that the Day of Judgment must have lost its terrors to the believer. But what warrant is there that such is the case? The very best in the world; for thus our Redeemer assures us: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death into life," John 5, 24. This cheering promise lies at the base of the apostle's call to the Philippians to rejoice; he reminds them of their exemption from that judgment in anticipation of which mankind trembles. The end toward which they are tending is assuredly one of the brightest aspect. The thought of the sweet welcome that shall greet him as he steps across the threshold of his distant home is what cheers the footsore traveler on his toilsome journey. The vision of the quiet port where his ship shall proudly ride at anchor braves the sailor in the stress of the fearful tempest. The certain expectation of the coming days of peace causes the fatigued soldier to forget his exhaustion and to rush bravely into the thick of the fight. In like manner, the believer sweetens the days of his present life with thoughts of the coming glories.

There is, like in the days when this epistle was written, much to dishearten an earnest follower of the Lord. Paul wrote this epistle from his prison at Rome, where the malice of the enemies of Christ kept him a prisoner. The efficient instrument for the dissemination of the saving truth that he had proved himself through a ministry of well-nigh a quarter of a century, it seemed as if the Church could ill afford in those seed times of her existence to be deprived of the ministration of this servant of Christ. How the holy apostle himself viewed his untimely imprisonment we may gather from a remark of his in this epistle. "I am in a strait betwixt two," he writes, "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, that, whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel," Phil. 1, 23—27. What self-possession speaks from these words! The apostle does not fret and grumble under his cross, but maintains a calm, well-tempered,

cheerfulness; for he is persuaded that, whatever may be the issues of his present affliction, one thing is certain, that, if he departs, it is but to meet the Lord. We thus see him practice his doctrine of uninterrupted joyfulness. And surely, his example is such as to render his words, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," all the more impressive. If under circumstances as aggravating as were those of the apostle it is still possible, yea, apparently easy, for a follower of Christ to be cheerful, then none of us, beloved fellow-Christians, could hope to excuse our lack of cheerfulness.

True, the lot of a sincere believer is at all times trying, but it is so only to the flesh. For what are the pains which disappointment, or the sorrow which the malice of men causes us, but signs of life of the old Adam in us? Faith cannot be deprived of its joy but by one thing, *viz.*, the withdrawal from it of the grace of God. Such an event, however, is impossible; or else God should have to rescind all His precious promises. As long, therefore, as the sun of God's mercy is still sending his genial rays into the darkness and frostiness of this world, we cannot but reflect his light and warmth. As the crystal waters ripple rejoicingly over the rocks with the golden beams of light mirrored in them; as the flowers in the fields lift their heads with the dewdrops sparkling in their cups, so the Christian who believes that his Lord is at hand cannot but reflect the joy that is in him. He feels the gracious presence of the Lord now, and while that presence already satisfies all his desires and leaves him in reality nothing more to wish, yet he is assured of further blessings when the visible presence of the Lord shall begin again. And this expectation of the final appearing of Christ sends its ruddy glow ahead of its coming, as the early dawn precedes the rising sun. In the rosy light of Christian anticipation all the events and issues of this present life are bathed, and seen in this light, even the most disgusting experiences of our present walk seem to have lost their evil aspect, so that the believer, like Paul, glories in tribulation "also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," Rom. 5, 3—5.

Joined with this all-pervading cheerfulness in Christians, the apostle desires to see another virtue, which he introduces thus: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Moderation is a rare gift in a life that is nearly all the time subject to sudden and far-extending changes. Both in our joys and in our sorrows, in our fears and in our hopes, in our love and in our dislike, we are liable to forget the even measure, and give way to passionate outbursts, which show that we have not yet learned the mastery of our own hearts. The moderate mind knows to keep all emotions within

bounds. There is a serene complacency noticeable in all its actions, which imparts a certain dignity to them. Like a ship that obeys the touch of the pilot at the rudder and evenly glides through the rough breakers, past foaming reefs, and through the rushing current, the heart of a believer yields to the check which moderation exercises over its emotions. Such a mind is not easily disconcerted: it is slow to anger, slow to speak an untimely word, slow to pass judgment upon the acts of a fellowman. Such a mind the apostle regards as one of the necessary fruits of Gospel preaching; for in his instructions to Titus he mentions as one of the duties of a Christian minister that he should put his hearers in mind "to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men," Tit. 3, 2. And in like manner does James depict the mind of a Christian as under the continual direction of a superior wisdom. "The wisdom that is from above," says he, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easily to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy," James 3, 17.

This virtue, beloved, is essential to success in our intercourse with one another and with people in general. There is in the doings of the men of this world a haste and hurry, a discontent and a proneness to vindictive speech and action that tends to disturb everything. We seem to be in a constant whirl of excitement; strong passions, like blasts of a cyclone, sweep us hither and thither; and even in the most sedate community and under quiet, peaceful surroundings we frequently find our mind becoming ruffled, and that, oftentimes at the most trivial and innocent occurrences. The days in our lives when we glided down the river of the passing hours without jars and collisions are few; excepting our early childhood days, it may well be doubted whether we have enjoyed one such day that we can recollect. As we increase in years, and learn the value of things, and feel the stimulus of ambition in the great struggle for existence, we find it more and more difficult to maintain evenness of temper, to take matters in good part, to make allowances, and to yield to the spirit of forgiveness and of meek submission. I have little doubt but that any of us, when casting up the sum total of the unpleasant experiences which he has had in life, may find enough to unsettle him in his composure by their mere recollection.

Here, then, the benign influence of the ministration of the grace of our Lord which we are enjoying, and the recollection that it is but "a little time and we shall see Him again" to joy before Him with undisturbed joy, ought to exert their genial influence in making us content with our lot, whatever that lot may be, and in causing us to waive strict justice in favor of blessed mercy. Such an effect attendance upon the divinely appointed means of grace has on all who do not willfully resist the operation of the Holy Ghost in their

hearts, namely, that it subdues all turbulent emotions, calms the passions, and makes us willing to forgive and forget. It begets a sweet even temper, and makes it easy to associate successfully with the crossdest and most perverse of men. In this wise the words of the forerunner of Christ are still being fulfilled; he cried in the wilderness: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight! Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth," Luke 3, 4. 5.

## 2.

But will not the believers be losers by such conduct in a world that makes it necessary for every one of its inhabitants to wrestle for his livelihood and strive for his right? Will not the wicked, by their bold forwardness and their selfish disregard for the rights of their fellowmen, simply override the Christian that always yields to them? It might seem so, but it is not so. I recollect having recently read of an investigation made fifteen years ago in one of our American towns, by which investigation it was shown that of each one hundred men owning and managing business enterprises in that town sixty-one were members of churches; twenty-seven were not members, but were regular attendants on some church. Only one in eight did not attend church. To those who made this count it may have been incapable of explanation, but we certainly cannot wonder at it, when we remember that our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount predicted it, saying: "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth," Matt. 5, 5. This fact merely confirms the discovery which David made three thousand years ago, and of which he speaks in the 37th Psalm: "I have been young and now I am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," v. 25.

Is there an explanation for this phenomenon other than the one suggested? Immediately after inculcating the duty of moderation, St. Paul in our lesson proceeds: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." You see the apostle, too, holds that to practice moderation, to cultivate the spirit of meekness, does not entail losses to the Christian. There is one instrument of our spiritual workmanship that the world knows not of: that is prayer. The prayerful mind, however, is begotten in the Christian by the firm conviction that his Lord is constantly employed about him, that He is at hand now, superintending invisibly all His temporal affairs, and that His last coming draweth nigh, when even this brief season of temporal toil and worry shall come to a glorious close. In this trustful conviction the Christian plucks up courage under every difficulty and makes to his ever near and ever ready Lord "all his wants and wishes known." He keeps his eyes in the direction of

the mountains whence cometh his help; he studies the innocent carelessness of the fowls of the air which sow not, neither do they reap; and yet the heavenly Father feedeth them; he considers the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin, and yet possess a glory that surpasses the purple and ermine of Solomon. He makes the words of the apostle his life motto: "Godliness and contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." He cherishes the thought that this life is but of short duration and its possessions are all perishable; why, then, should he labor and toil, strive and worry, fight and wrestle for a handful of dust and ashes, for that which moth and rust corrupt and thieves may any moment carry off? The warning of the Lord is at all times present with him: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" For he is well aware that the cares of this life are fraught with terrible temptations, since "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

For that is, after all, the usual outcome of the grasping, greedy endeavors of the worldlings. After a life of the most exacting cares, in which they have sacrificed their peace of mind, the happiness of their homes, the good-will of their fellowmen, and their own self-respect, what have they gained? When they imagine themselves ready to settle down to a calm enjoyment of their ill-gotten gains, there comes the terrible summons: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Ah, it is indeed, beloved, as the holy singer of Israel has said: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He giveth His beloved sleep."

Now, true believers live in constant anticipation of the return of their Lord, and cannot give over their hearts to anything that should draw their thoughts away from that one great event of the future. "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." This truth shines forth from their entire conversation. They have Jesus, and they hold that Christ and a crust is riches. Meanwhile the issues of their temporal pilgrimage are all in the hands of the Lord; there they have placed them in believing prayer. Morning and evening the voice of their supplications is heard in

the courts on high, and swift as on eagle's wing the answer is wafted back: "I have heard thee, and all is well."

And now the voice of the apostle rises to a sublime grandeur, as he says: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." These words are intended to allay the last fears which the believer might entertain regarding the usefulness of the apostle's advice in the foregoing words. It is indeed a magnificent program which the holy writer has laid down, and one which might well fill one who somewhat knows this present life with doubts as to its practicability. Perennial joy, undisturbed evenness of temper, a mysterious want of care, an inexplicable unconcern in all that constitutes the greater part of man's daily worry,—all this the apostle desires to characterize as the walk of his beloved Philippians. Will it be possible? Will not the evil which each day in its turn brings forth draw an ugly line across this beautiful program? Will not our best resolutions to adopt the apostle's advice be sadly shattered as soon as the first new trouble makes its appearance? Yes, the apostle seems to say: I know that in you, that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing; to will may be present with you, but do that which is good you shall not find. But fear not; the aspect of the coming evils must be tempered by the assurance of Him who said: "In the world you have fear; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The promise, "The Lord is at hand," shall also in this respect exert a blessed influence; shall make you equal to the burden of each hour; shall stablish your hearts in the day of grief; shall quicken your step when you are ready to faint by the way; shall bear you up and lift you over every obstacle. And in all your trials you shall not lose the peace of God out of your hearts. You shall be surprised, and others shall wonder with you, when all is over, how it was possible for you to bear all. No wisdom is able to understand this peace of the children of God; it is the very reverse of what men would expect under similar circumstances. It is a divine peace and can only be obtained by faith. God grant us all this peace, and fulfill to us the precious promises of our lesson, in order that, when He comes, He may not be ashamed of us! Amen.

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## Sermon for Christmas Eve, or Matin.

Is. 9, 6.

Christmas! What unspeakable joy the sound of this word brings to the believer's heart! At the mere sound of this word all sadness and sorrow must cease. Christmas! Happiness and rejoicing everywhere! Happy are young and old, rich and poor, well and sick!

At this great festival season of the Christian Church each and every Christian's face beams forth the rapturous joy experienced in his heart.

And why such universal joy and happiness? Christmas, the gladdest day of all the year, again brings us the blessed tidings of salvation, of full and free salvation for all. The Christian's joy and happiness is expressed in the words of the poet, "All my heart this night rejoices . . . with joy is ringing." "Come, then, banish all your sadness . . . songs of gladness."

May God's Holy Spirit imbue us with the true Christmas spirit, with love and thankfulness to Him who to-day comes down from heaven to visit and to save His people! To this end let us devoutly and earnestly consider:

#### ISAIAH'S GLORIOUS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE.

##### 1.

The greatest prophet of the Old Testament Covenant, Isaiah, stands in spirit at the manger in Bethlehem's dark stable, and looking with eyes of faith into the sweet countenance of the newly-born Babe, exultantly rejoices, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given!" What a wonderful message! A child, God's own Son, He whom Isaiah calls "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," is born, born of the Virgin Mary, as Isaiah himself had prophesied: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." God's only Son, begotten of the Father from eternity, the effulgence of the Father's glory and majesty, the Alpha and Omega, has left the throne of His heavenly mansion and has assumed our nature, has become our flesh, our brother. By the miraculous working of the Holy Ghost, Mary, the chosen virgin of God, has become the mother of the great God on high. Has a greater wonder occurred on this earth? By the incarnation of Jesus Christ, Himself true God with the Father and with the Holy Ghost, God has manifested His great, overbounding, and all-embracing love towards the fallen human race. This unfathomable love of God Christ Himself portrays in the words: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." And the Apostle St. John expresses this truth in the words: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent forth His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

But why was it necessary that God, in order to manifest His love toward the world, should give His only-begotten Son into our flesh and blood? My friends, it is a sad story to tell, but it is absolutely necessary to hear it if we are to understand the glorious Christmas tidings.

Man, who had been created in the image of God, in perfect righteousness and holiness, man, the crown of all creation, turned away from his God and Creator, hearkened unto the seducing voice of the Tempter, and fell into sin; from a child of God, he became an enemy of the Most High, a slave of sin, and a child of perdition. Each and every man without exception is now born into this world a sinner. I and you must confess: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." The righteousness and holiness in which our first parents left the hands of their Creator is now a lost jewel, total depravity, depravity of body and soul, has taken its place. For, says Scripture, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." It is true, only too true of every human being, what St. Paul confesses of himself: "I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." Our iniquities have separated between us and our God. Sin has become the insurmountable barrier between God and man.

God is a just and righteous God. On Mount Sinai He gave His holy Law, His Ten Commandments, and demands a perfect compliance to the same in thoughts, words, deeds, and desires. But so depraved is our whole nature that no human being can fulfill the demands of this Law. "We are all," as Isaiah says, "as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Having left the path of righteousness and chosen the path of sin, having insulted our God and provoked His wrath by our inability to comply with His just demands, the Law pronounces over us its dreadful curse: "Cursed be he who confirmeth not all the words of the Law to do them," and: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," *i. e.*, temporal and eternal death shall be the sinner's portion.

How gladly would I here cease to portray the hateful picture of our sinful condition and God's wrath over us; but more must be said if we are to grasp the glorious Christmas message.

Our sinful condition becomes all the more deplorable when we consider that no human creature could save us, could extricate us from the all-consuming wrath of God, from hell and perdition, which we all have deserved. Being dead in trespasses and sin, inclined to all that is evil, as Scripture expressly states, we could not help ourselves, could make no amends for our guilt, could in no wise appease the wrath of God. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever." Yea, even the holy angels of God, these spotless messengers of the Most High, could not help us. We were lost in sin, irrevocably lost, if help and salvation depended upon the agency of creatures.

My friends, only when you deeply feel this your total depravity,

only when you understand that Scripture describes *you* when it portrays man in his natural state, only when you are overwhelmed with the feeling of your guilt before God, whose eyes penetrate even into the most secret recesses of your heart, only then can you comprehend and be truly thankful for the glorious Christmas message: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given."

And now let me, in a few words, show you the great, joyous news to poor sinners contained in this Christmas message.

## 2.

Although our sins built an impassable gulf between us and our Creator, He, the great God of love, would not have us perish. In His wisdom, prompted by His love and mercy, He devised a plan of salvation. This plan of salvation Isaiah expresses in the words, "Unto us a Son is given;" and in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecies he outlines this plan of salvation by saying of that Son: "Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him."

In order to save us who could not save ourselves, God in His infinite love and mercy decided: "I will give my Son to the sinners. Jesus, my beloved Son, is to become man, is to be placed under the Law and to fulfill it in man's stead as his substitute; He is to take upon Himself the sins of the world and to suffer for them. Through His vicarious suffering and death He is to atone for the sins of all mankind, to obtain a perfect righteousness, clothed in which the sinner may stand before my tribunal."

And behold, my friends, in order to carry out this plan of salvation, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, was to-day born of the Virgin Mary. To-day, 19— years ago, Jesus left the throne of glory, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man in order to perform His great mission, the reconciliation of God and man. While the angel of God on Bethlehem's fields proclaimed the greatest message the sinful world had ever heard: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior;" while the multitude of the heavenly host poured forth its exultant strains into the darkness of the night: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," Jesus, the Savior, entered the world—to leave it on Calvary's cross with the words, "It is finished," which made hell and the ruler of darkness tremble, but for which all believing souls will sing His praises into all eternity.

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." My friends, is this not a glorious message? Jesus, the Christ-child in the manger, is your *Savior*, your *Deliverer* from sin and Satan's power, your *Lord* and *Redeemer*.

Do not doubt these glad tidings! The angel of God explains Isaiah's Christmas message by saying: "Unto *you* is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior." Unto *you*, whoever and whatever you may be, unto each and every one of you without exception, the Savior is born. When God in His grace and mercy decided to send the world a Redeemer, He included *you* in His plan of salvation. His love embraced *you* in His marvelous gift. For *you* Jesus became man, for *you* He fulfilled all the demands of the divine Law and gained a perfect righteousness; for *you* He suffered and died.

Will you not accept God's gift? In Him, and in Him only, the Christ-child in the manger, is there salvation, free and full salvation for you and for all.

Look with eyes of faith into the manger, behold His beautiful eyes, His heavenly smile, and tell Him that which He longs to hear: "Jesus, Thou art *my* Jesus, *my* Lord, *my* Savior and Redeemer!"

And having accepted Him in true faith, renounce the world, sin, and your own flesh, and live only unto *Him*. In His strength lead a new life, in all your paths lean but on *Him*, and finally He will lead you into His everlasting kingdom, where you will sing His praises in all eternity. Amen.

J. GEORGE SP.

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## Funeral Sermon.

2 TIM. 3, 15. 16.

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The news of Mr. M——'s death brought to us on Wednesday morning caused profound sorrow in the hearts of thousands living in our city and far beyond her confines. Because of his strict honesty and integrity and his loving and sunny disposition all that came in contact with him honored and respected him. Being a public-spirited man, he contributed much to the advancement of this community. We can truthfully say: If all citizens of Fort Wayne were as law-abiding as he was, there would be very little to do for the courts; if they would all be as thrifty and industrious as he was, there would be very few beggars; if all would be as regular in their habits as he was, we could get along with less physicians and surgeons; if all would be as kind and considerate in their families as he was, we would have no divorces; if all would be as charitable as he was, the poor and needy would be well taken care of.

Yet it would certainly be deplorable if that were all we could say of that portion of his existence which God allotted to him on earth. All this would bring little comfort to the hearts of those who have been sorely afflicted by his sudden demise. It would not give them the assurance of his having gone to that place of peace and rest spoken of in the Bible, an assurance necessary to console the

heart in the hour of such a sad bereavement. But thanks be to God that we know more of him! *He was a faithful member of the Lutheran Church.* In his youth he was diligently instructed in the Word of God by pious parents and teachers. No sooner had he come to this city than he joined the St. Paul's Congregation, to which he belonged for more than half a century. During the last year of his life he worshiped in the Emmaus Church of this city. Both congregations he served for a number of years in different capacities. He always took a lively interest in the affairs of the Missouri Synod, which was founded in the year of his arrival in the New World, and to which our congregation belongs. Frequently he attended her meetings as delegate of the Fort Wayne congregations, and contributed largely towards her support. The institutions of learning of our synod for the education of ministers and teachers were especially dear to him. For a long time he was therefore a member of the Board of Trustees of Concordia College of this place. To him apply the words of Paul spoken to his disciple Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Two truths standing out prominently in this text are held fast by every sincere Lutheran, or Bible Christian, and were consequently also held fast by our departed friend; in the first place the truth: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;* and in the second place the truth: *The Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

## 1.

In our days there is a widespread and still growing belief among those calling themselves Christians that the Bible is not God's Word, at least not in its entirety. I am sorry to say that professors of the country in which the cradle of the Reformation stood have mostly sown this pernicious seed. They claim science has shown many statements of the Bible to be false, especially of the Old Testament. And though their assertions have been disproved over and over by what has been dug up in those countries mentioned in the Bible, they continue in their work of destruction. They proceed in telling the world that the Bible contains truth and falsehood, divine and human thoughts.

On the other hand, the Apostle Paul states most positively: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." And again: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." All Scripture, everything that is contained in the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, is from the lips of the Holy Ghost. The holy men of God, those prophets of old, spake as they

were moved by the Holy Ghost. Their tongues were pens of that ready writer, the Holy Ghost. And the same holds good in regard to the New Testament. On this point, as on all other points, the prophets and apostles agree with the Master of masters, Jesus Christ, who said concerning the Old Testament: "The Scripture cannot be broken," and of the words of His apostles: "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me."

This, my friends, is the faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This was also the persuasion of the deceased friend. He accepted the words of the prophets and apostles as the words of God. He looked upon the Bible as the judge in all spiritual matters, from whose decision there is no appeal, whose statements are final. When opening his Bible he would pray with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth!" The Bible was unto him a "precious book divine," which he enjoyed to read and to study. He loved the habitation of the house of God, and was a regular attendant at his church, where the wonderful works of the Lord are proclaimed. He was therefore well at home in the Book of books and solidly built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, or to speak with our text, he knew the Holy Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God. Our friend was therefore a wise man, for the Scripture is able to make us wise; he was a rich man, for the Bible is more than gold and much fine gold; he was a blessed man, for "blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." For this reason it was his earnest endeavor to impart the teachings of the Bible to his children. Therefore he often read to them from the Book of books, and sent them to a school in which the Bible and that sincere milk of the Bible, Luther's Small Catechism, were the chief text-books.

## 2.

But there is another truth, with which all children of God are perfectly familiar, yea, in which they rejoice as the foundation of their hope in life and death, contained in our text: The Scripture makes us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Here we are shown the only gateway to eternal life. Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by Him. Let us enlarge upon this Scriptural saying for a few moments.

The Apostle St. John writes: "The whole world lieth in wickedness." The greatest wickedness of all ages, however, has been the claim of man that he can enter heaven by his own works, that he can be saved by his own righteousness, that he can lead a life that will end with eternal bliss, that he does not need a Savior to take away any sins and to open up to him everlasting life. What do these words amount to? Why, they cast the lie into God's teeth, they

despise the Savior and His work; for "if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain," this is what Paul says. This is the sin of sins of the present day; the lie proclaimed as truth by thousands of lodges and so-called churches; the deceit of Satan destroying more souls into hell than all other sins taken together.

Allow me to show forth the truth of my statement in a few words from the Bible. All men without exception are by nature sinners. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. We are all children of wrath by nature: this is the plain handwriting of the Bible witnessing against you and against me. Can you deny its being true? Did you always love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself? Not you. Not I. Therefore, so far as our righteousness is concerned, our sentence is found in these words of Paul: "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them!" and: "The wages of sin is death." We would all be lost, if the righteousness of the Law were the only righteousness revealed to us.

But,—glory be to God!—there is another righteousness spoken of in our Bible. It is there for you and for me. It is the righteousness the Son of God has wrought for the whole world by His innocent life, suffering, death, and by His glorious resurrection. He is the Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world. "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." "He is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." This Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith or trust in, through reliance upon, Christ Jesus, because it says: Look to the Savior for help and deliverance from all your sins, believe that He is your righteousness and your advocate with the Father, and you are saved from sin, death, and destruction, and will enter eternal life. This is the only way to true rest and peace for the king and the beggar, for the young and the old, for man and wife, for the respectable and the vicious. And I repeat the statement, It is the way open to *all*. Blessed are they that enter this gate standing ajar for all in Christ Jesus!

Blessed is, therefore, also our departed friend and brother. Though he was a man of whom any community could be proud, because of his uprightness and godly life, he did not rely upon his righteousness, but humbled himself under the mighty hand of God most thoroughly, and confessed that he daily sinned much and deserved nothing but punishment; but at the same time he firmly laid hold upon Christ and His righteousness. When his pastor, therefore, during his last illness repeated that beautiful explanation of the Second Article of our Christian faith: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost

and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His, holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity," — when his pastor repeated these words to him, he said, "That is my faith; I believe that with all my heart." His was therefore the confession of Paul: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." This was the source of his joy and happiness. On this account he feared no evil when entering the valley of the shadow of death. It was not hard for him to part with his earthly possessions, since he had found the one thing needful in the Lamb that was slain and has redeemed us to God by His blood. It was easy for him to leave his beautiful earthly home, because he knew he would enter the mansions in his Father's house. He could cheerfully take leave of the companion of his life and his children, because he had frequently admonished them to continue in the things which they had learned, and could therefore in his last hour say to them: "Weep not! Whither I go you know, and the way you know. Soon we shall meet again to part no more." And finally he calmly fell asleep to awake again on the shores of eternity. His soul is borne up by the angels into Abraham's bosom, and his body is to lie at rest to that day of awakening which God has appointed.

Beloved mourning friends, need I comfort you under these circumstances? Ah, your husband and father has performed that task better than I could, or, rather, God has wiped away your tears by having kept the deceased by His power through faith unto salvation.

To you who have come here to attend this funeral I would say: We must all cross the river over which our friend has passed. We may soon writhe in pain that will destroy this house of our soul, our body. Are we ready to pass from the time of grace to the throne of judgment? I conjure you by the living God, speaking as "a dying man to dying men," do not put this preparation off! Seek the salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, offered to you in the Scriptures. Your Savior is wooing you with divine love: "Come, for all things are now ready!" "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

From the mount of Calvary  
Where my Savior deigned to die,  
What melodious sounds I hear,  
Bursting on my ravished ear?  
Love's redeeming work is done,  
Come and welcome, sinner, come!

Amen.

J. W. M.